

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A shipping system for the facilitated packing and transportation of items, wherein the items are of a type requiring separation between vertically stacked layers, the shipping system comprising:

at least one shipping unit, each shipping unit further comprising:

at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays, wherein each of said shipping trays is operably configured to be capable of being stacked atop another of the at least two trays, wherein in the stacked configuration each of said shipping trays has at least one shipping tray positioned adjacent thereto such that a pair of adjacently stacked shipping trays includes an upper adjacent substantially open-topped shipping tray and a lower adjacent substantially open-topped shipping tray;

each tray having a top, two opposing side walls and a bottom wall, the bottom wall having a bottom surface, each of the opposing side walls having at least two stacking tabs wherein the stacking tabs of one opposing side wall are substantially aligned with the stacking tabs of the other opposing side wall;

a cover, operably configured to be positioned atop an uppermost one of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays of the at least one shipping unit, wherein the bottom wall of each upper adjacent substantially open-topped shipping tray is a lid for each lower adjacent substantially open-topped shipping tray; and

at least one binding member, operably configured to hold the cover atop the uppermost substantially open-topped shipping tray of the at least one shipping unit, by extending at least partially across the ~~top~~ cover and substantially between the stacking tabs of the uppermost substantially open-topped shipping tray, down the side walls and at least partially across the bottom wall of a plurality of stacked articles, wherein the binding member comprises at least one strip of adhesive material, simultaneously engaging a top surface of the cover and the

bottom surface of a bottom-most one of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays;

wherein each substantially open-topped shipping tray of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays has substantially the same top plan configuration, and the cover has a top plan configuration substantially the same as each of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays.

2. (previously presented) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein at least one substantially open-topped shipping tray of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays is fabricated from corrugated paperboard material.

3. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein at least one cover is fabricated from corrugated paperboard material.

4. (currently amended) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein the at least one shipping unit includes at least two trays, and at least one of the trays includes stacking tabs, and the other of the at least two trays includes two substantially open-topped shipping trays further include a first shipping tray including stacking tabs and a second shipping tray including apertures for receiving the stacking tabs of the other of the at least two trays first shipping tray.

5. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein the cover comprises a substantially planar pad.

6. (currently amended) The shipping system according to claim 5, wherein the pad is configured to accommodate the stacking tabs extending upwardly from an uppermost substantially open-topped tray of the shipping unit.

7. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein the cover has a shoe box type lid configuration.

8. (currently amended) The shipping system according to claim 7, wherein the shoe box type lid configuration is configured to accommodate the stacking tabs extending upwardly from an uppermost substantially open-topped tray of the shipping unit.

9. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein the at least one binding member comprises at least one substantially thin, flat band encircling the at least one substantially open-topped tray and the cover.

10. (original) The shipping system according to claim 9, wherein the at least one band is fabricated from paper material.

11. (original) The shipping system according to claim 9, wherein the at least one band is fabricated from plastic material.

12. (original) The shipping system according to claim 9, wherein the at least one band is a metal strap.

13. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein the shipping unit comprises at least two non-identical substantially open-topped trays, having substantially similar top plan configurations.

14. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein at least one shipping tray is fabricated from plastic material.

15. (original) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein at least one cover is fabricated from plastic material.

16. (cancelled).

17. (previously presented) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein each of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays is fabricated from a single piece of corrugated paperboard material.

18. (previously presented) The shipping system according to claim 1, wherein each of said at least two substantially open-topped shipping trays further comprising a front wall, a rear wall and a gusset positioned at each corner of the bottom wall, each gusset extending diagonally connecting at least one of the front wall and the rear wall to at least one of the two opposing side walls.